NATIONAL DEFENSE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

EDUCATION AND THE ARTS

ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT

HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE

INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORTATION

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

LAW AND BUSINESS

NATIONAL SECURITY

POPULATION AND AGING

PUBLIC SAFETY

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

TERRORISM AND HOMELAND SECURITY

The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit institution that helps improve policy and decisionmaking through research and analysis.

This electronic document was made available from www.rand.org as a public service of the RAND Corporation.

Skip all front matter: Jump to Page 1

Support RAND

Purchase this document

Browse Reports & Bookstore

Make a charitable contribution

For More Information

Visit RAND at www.rand.org

Explore the RAND National Defense Research Institute

View document details

Limited Electronic Distribution Rights

This document and trademark(s) contained herein are protected by law as indicated in a notice appearing later in this work. This electronic representation of RAND intellectual property is provided for non-commercial use only. Unauthorized posting of RAND electronic documents to a non-RAND website is prohibited. RAND electronic documents are protected under copyright law. Permission is required from RAND to reproduce, or reuse in another form, any of our research documents for commercial use. For information on reprint and linking permissions, please see RAND Permissions.

This product is part of the RAND Corporation occasional paper series. RAND occasional papers may include an informed perspective on a timely policy issue, a discussion of new research methodologies, essays, a paper presented at a conference, a conference summary, or a summary of work in progress. All RAND occasional papers undergo rigorous peer review to ensure that they meet high standards for research quality and objectivity.

OCCASIONAL
PAPER

Reintegrating Afghan Insurgents

Seth G. Jones

Prepared for the Marine Corps Intelligence Activity

Approved for public release; distribution unlimited

NATIONAL DEFENSE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

The research described in this report was prepared for the Marine Corps Intelligence Activity. The research was conducted within the RAND National Defense Research Institute, a federally funded research and development center sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, the Unified Combatant Commands, the Navy, the Marine Corps, the defense agencies, and the defense Intelligence Community under Contract W74V8H-06-C-0002.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Jones, Seth G., 1972-
Reintegrating Afghan insurgents / Seth G. Jones.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references.
ISBN 978-0-8330-5138-7 (pbk. : alk. paper)
1. Afghanistan—Armed Forces--Demobilization. 2. Soldiers—Rehabilitation—Afghanistan. I. Title.

UA853.A3J68 2011
958.104'71—dc23

2011027832

The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit institution that helps improve policy and decisionmaking through research and analysis. RAND's publications do not necessarily reflect the opinions of its research clients and sponsors.

RAND® is a registered trademark.

© Copyright 2011 RAND Corporation

Permission is given to duplicate this document for personal use only, as long as it is unaltered and complete. Copies may not be duplicated for commercial purposes. Unauthorized posting of RAND documents to a non-RAND website is prohibited. RAND documents are protected under copyright law. For information on reprint and linking permissions, please visit the RAND permissions page (http://www.rand.org/publications/permissions.html).

Published 2011 by the RAND Corporation
1776 Main Street, P.O. Box 2138, Santa Monica, CA 90407-2138
1200 South Hayes Street, Arlington, VA 22202-5050
4570 Fifth Avenue, Suite 600, Pittsburgh, PA 15213-2665
RAND URL: http://www.rand.org
To order RAND documents or to obtain additional information, contact
Distribution Services: Telephone: (310) 451-7002;
Fax: (310) 451-6915; Email: order@rand.org

Summary

Successful counterinsurgency requires getting insurgents to switch sides. Former insurgents provide an invaluable source of information on their previous colleagues, sow discord, and ultimately cause momentum to shift toward counterinsurgent forces. This brief analysis examines reintegrating Taliban and other insurgents into their local communities in Afghanistan and outlines steps to facilitate the reintegration process.

Reintegration refers to operational and tactical efforts to assimilate low to mid-level insurgents and leaders peacefully into their local communities.[1] It is generally distinguished from *reconciliation*, which involves high-level, strategic, and political dialogue with senior leaders of major insurgent groups—such as the Taliban, Haqqani network, and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami (HIG)—to terminate their armed resistance against the Afghan government.[2] As U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates explained: "With respect to reintegration, this is really about getting the foot soldiers to decide that they don't want to be a part of the Taliban any more."[3] Some Afghan government documents use slightly different definitions of reintegration and reconciliation.[4]

This assessment asks two questions: What factors increase the likelihood of reintegrating fighters? What are the key options for fighters as they consider reintegration? It reaches several conclusions:

- At least three factors appear to raise the probability of reintegration: (a) increasing the perception that Afghan and Coalition forces are winning the war, especially at the local level; (b) utilizing coercion against insurgents, including targeted raids to kill or capture insurgent leaders; and (c) addressing key grievances, such as tribal or sub-tribal conflicts, employment, security, or governance failures.
- Based on an analysis of 36 reintegration cases in Afghanistan since 2001, in 36 percent of the cases insurgents reintegrated because they believed the Taliban or other groups were losing the war (at least in their local areas); in 33 percent of the cases coercion was a critical factor; and in 71 percent of the cases insurgents reintegrated because of grievances.
- Reintegration should not be a *reactive* process in which Afghan and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) officials merely respond to individuals or groups that contact them. Instead, *proactive* efforts can be conducted that identify individuals as favorable candidates for reintegration. For example, proactive assessments can be conducted that identify individuals, villages, and even larger entities (such as clans or sub-tribes) as favorable candidates for reintegration.
- Although reintegration requires Afghan government leadership, the central government is sometimes poorly synchronized with local officials. Tactical units cannot always wait for the central government to act in a timely manner. Consequently, effective reintegration

may require tactical units to cooperate with local officials; provincial and district governors; tribal and community leaders; and National Directorate of Security (NDS), Afghan National Police (ANP), and Afghan National Army (ANA) officials.

- Past reintegration cases suggest there are a range of helpful procedures once a fighter—or group of fighters—considers reintegration:
  - *Screening of candidates*. Conduct in-depth questioning, contact human sources, analyze databases, and gather biometric and other relevant data. Afghan and ISAF units should be aware that insurgents may use reintegration as a way to attack ISAF or Afghan forces, collect intelligence, or stall operations.
  - *Holding and security procedures*. Establish holding procedures if necessary. Detention should be used as a last resort and, in some instances, may be counterproductive if it triggers a backlash from local communities. Detainees should be treated fairly, kept safe, and not be punished if they are willing to talk.
  - *Incentives*. Consider a range of financial and other assistance for potential candidates, including resettlement aid and security protection. Afghan programs that support a long-term solution, such as employment or education, can be particularly helpful.
  - *Engaging tribal and other local leaders*. Operate through legitimate local institutions, including *jirgas* and *shuras* (local councils), to help resettle reintegrated personnel into villages. Reintegration may only be successful when tribal and other local leaders are involved, supported by the Afghan government and ISAF units, and prepared to stake their prestige to help reintegrate former combatants.
  - *Information operations*. Disseminate information that reintegration is a viable option to the local population and neutralize insurgent propaganda. Reintegrated personnel can help create opportunities by demonstrating to insurgents the benefits of switching to the government side.
  - *Active use of reintegrated individuals*. Consider utilizing individuals in a range of ways where feasible: to collect intelligence, to participate in local defense forces, to act as scouts, and to accept positions in the Afghan government.

This analysis adopts a straightforward methodology: It examines 36 reintegration cases in Afghanistan since 2001, including explanations of why insurgents opted to reintegrate.[5] Table 1 in Chapter One presents the cases; the lessons learned from the cases are integrated throughout the document. However, any study of reintegration has methodological and analytical pitfalls. There is no complete data set of reintegration cases, and many cases are not regularly reported—or compiled—by Afghan or ISAF officials. In addition, it is not always clear why insurgents reintegrate. Some discussions are clandestine and occur with Afghan or other intelligence agencies, and insurgents may publicly or privately misrepresent their reasons for reintegration. Nevertheless, the initial dataset in this document is a major step forward that provides a critical lens with which to examine reintegration.

This paper is divided into three parts. First, it presents factors that have contributed to reintegration in Afghanistan and other counterinsurgencies. Second, it outlines operational and tactical steps to take when insurgents consider reintegration. Third, it offers a brief conclusion.